CHRIST

The Pearl of great Price;

OR,

The Excellency of CHRIST to Believers ſet forth.

Being a Divine Meſſage from God to poor Sinners: Or, A dreadful Warning to all Impenitent Sinners.

I. Wherein JESUS CHRIST and Salvation are freely offer'd to all that will come in and accept of it, before the Day of Grace is paſt.
II. Shewing the great Danger of ſlighting Chriſt and Salvation tendered in the Goſpel.
III. With ſweet Invitations to all poor Sinners to cloſe with JESUS CHRIST, and be happy for ever.

By Mr. RICHARD BAXTER.

Mat. xiii. 45, 46. *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Merchant Man, ſeeking goodly Pearls, who when he had found one Pearl of great Price, he went and ſold all that he had and bought it.*
Heb. ii. 3. *How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great Salvation*, &c.

Edinburgh: Printed and Sold in *Pearſon's* Cloſs oppoſite to the Croſs, North Side of the Street, 1727.

Canon
Light
book 1-2

A Divine Meſſage; or, CHRIST the *Pearl of great Price.*

Matth. xxii. 2, 3, 4, 5. *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King which made a Marriage for his Son, and ſent forth his Servants to call them that were bidden to the Wedding, and they would not come. Again he ſent forth other Servants, ſaying tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my Dinner; my Oxen and my Fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: Come unto the Marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his Farm, and another to his Merchandiſe.*

THE bleſſed Son of God, that thought it not enough to die for the World, but would himſelf alſo be the Preacher of *Grace and Salvation*, doth compriſe in this Parable the Sum of his Goſpel. By the King that is here ſaid to make the Marriage, is meant God the Father, that ſent his Son into the World to cleanſe them from their Sins, and eſpouſe them to himſelf. By his Son, *for whom the Marriage was made*, is meant the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Eternal Son of God, who took to his God-head the Nature of Man, that he might be capableof being their Redeemer, when they had loſt themſelves in Sin. By the Marriage is meant the conjunction of Chriſt to the Soul of Sinners, when he giveth up himſelf to them, to be their Saviour, and they give up themſelves to him as his redeemed ones, to be ſaved and ruled by him; the Perfection of which Marriage will be at the Day of Judgment, when the Conjunction between the whole Church and Chriſt

ſhall be ſolemnized. The World here in this Parable is invited by the Goſpel to come in and partake of Chriſt and Salvation, which comprehendeth both Pardon, Juſtification and Right to Salvation, and all other privileges of the Members of Chriſt. The Invitation is God's Offer of Chriſt and Salvation in the Goſpel, the Servants that invite them are the Preachers of the Goſpel, who are ſent forth for that End, the Preparation for the Feaſt there mentioned, is the Sacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt, and opening a way for revolting Sinners to return to God. The firſt Perſons invited are the Jews; upon their obſtinate refuſal, they are ſentenced for Puniſhment, and the Gentiles are invited, not only invited, but by the powerful Preaching, and Miracles, and effectual Grace Intreated and prevailed with to come in, but they made light of it. From which Words we ſhall ground our whole Diſcourſe containing an account of the ill Entertainment that the Goſpel findeth with many to whom it is ſent, even after the firſt and ſecond Invitation they make light of it, and are taken up with other Things. Though the *Jews* were firſt guilty of it, yet too many of us Gentiles are like them at this Day.

The Sum of theſe Words we ſhall compriſe in this Doctrine. For all the wonderful Love and *Mercy* that God hath manifeſted in giving his *Son* to be the Redeemer of the World, and which the *Son* hath manifeſted in Redeeming them by his *Blood*; for all his full Preparation by being a ſufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of all; for all his Perſonal Excellencies, and that full and Glorious Salvation that he hath Procured; and for all his free Offers of theſe, and frequent and earneſt invitations of Sinners; yet many make light of all this, and prefer the Worldly Enjoyments before it; the ordinary entertainment of all is by contempt. Not that all do ſo that were once guilty of it, for God hath choſen whom he will compel to come in, but till the

Spir

Spirit of Grace overpower the Dead and obſtinate *Hearts* of Men, they hear the Goſpel as a common Story, and the great Matters contained in it go not to the *Heart*.

1. I ſhall ſhew what it is that *Men* make light of. The Thing that carnal *Hearers* make light of, is, firſt, the Doctrine of the Goſpel it ſelf, which they hear regardleſsly. Secondly, the Benefits offered them therein are Chriſt himſelf. Concerning Chriſt himſelf, the Goſpel declareth his Perſon and Nature, and the great Things he hath done and ſuffered for Man; his Redeeming him from the wrath of God by his *Blood*, and procuring a grant of *Salvation* with himſelf. Furthermore the ſame Goſpel maketh an offer of Chriſt to *Sinners*, that if they will accept of him on eaſie and reaſonable Terms, he will be their Saviour, the *Phyſician* of their Souls, their husband and head.

2. The Benefits that he offered them are theſe.

1. That with theſe bleſſed Relations to him, and Intereſt in him, they ſhall have the Pardon of all their Sins paſt, and ſaved from God's Wrath to come, ſo that they obey ſincerely and turn not again to the Rebellion of their unregeneracy.

2 They ſhall have the *Spirit* to become their Guide and *Sanctifier*, and to dwell in their Souls, and to help them againſt their Enemies; And bring them back to God.

3. They ſhall have right to everlaſting Glory when this Life is ended, beſides many more excellent Priviledges, with the foretaſte of what they ſhall enjoy hereafter. All theſe Benefits the Goſpel offereth to them that will have Chriſt on reaſonable Terms: The ſum of all is in 1 *John* v. 11, 12. This is the Record, that God hath given Eternal Life, And this Life is in his Son. *He that hath the Son hath Life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not Life.* In the next place I ſhall ſhew what this making light of the Goſpel is.

1. It

1. It is not taking heed to what is spoken as though it was not a Matter of Truth or a thing that little concerned them. When the Gospel doth not affect them or go to their Hearts, yet Men are not awakned by it from their security; when we tell Men what Christ hath done and suffered for their Souls, and it scarce moveth them: Our Words take up in the porch of their Ears and Fancies, but will not enter into their inward Parts, as if we were speaking to them that had no Hearts or Feeling. This is making light of Christ. *Acts* xxviii, *Hearing ye shall hear and not understand, seeing, ye shall see, and not perceive, for the Hearts of this People are waxen gross, and their Ears are dull of Hearing, their Eyes are closed up.*

2. The main Cause of Mens slighting of Christ and Salvation, is a secret Root of unbelief in Mens Hearts. Whatsoever they pretend, they do not soundly and throughly believe the Word of God; they are taught to say the Gospel is true, but they never saw the evidence of its Truth, so far as throughly to perswade them of it, nor have they got their Souls settled on the infallibility of God's Testimony, nor considered of the Truth of the particular Doctrines revealed in the Scripture, so far as soundly to believe them. Oh! did you all soundly believe the Words of this Gospel, of the Evil of Sin, of the need of Christ, and what he hath done for you, and what you must be and do if ever you will be saved by him, and what will become of you for ever, if you do not; I dare say it would cure the Contempt of Christ, and you would not make so light of the Matters of your Salvation. But Men do not believe, while they say they do, and would face us down that they do, and verily think they do themselves. *There is a Root of Bitterness, and an evil Heart of Unbelief, that makes them depart from the living God.* Heb. 12. The Heart is hard naturally, by custom of sinning made more hard, by long abuse of Mercy, neglect

Neglect of the means of Grace, and reſiſting of the Spirit of God. Hence it is that Men are turned into Stones, and till God cure them of the Stone of the *Heart*, no wonder they feel not what they know, or regard what is preached to them, but make light of all. When *Mens Hearts* are like the High-way, that is trodden to hardneſs by long Cuſtom of Sinning, or like the Clay that is hardned into a Stone by the *Heat* of theſe Mercies that ſhould have melted them into Repentance; *When their Conſciences are ſeared with a hot Iron*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks in the 2 Tim. iv. 3. no Wonder then if they be paſt feeling, and work all Uncleanneſs with greedineſs, do make light of Chriſt and everlaſting Glory. Oh that it were not the Caſe of too many Hearers of the Goſpel at this Day. Oh had we living Souls to ſpeak to, they would hear and feel, and not make light of what we ſay. I know that they are naturally alive, but ſpiritually dead, as the Scripture witneſſeth in *Eph.* ii. 3. Oh, if there were but one Spark of the Life of Grace in them, the Doctrine of Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt would appear to them the weightieſt Buſineſs in the World. In a Word, Men of a worldly Diſpoſition do judge of all Things according to worldly Advantages, therefore Chriſt is ſlighted, *Iſa.* lii. 3. *He is deſpiſed and rejected of Men, they hid their Faces from him, and eſteemed him not, as ſeeing no Beauty or Comlineſs in him, that they ſhould deſire him.*

3. Chriſt and Salvation are made light of, becauſe Men are never ſenſible of their Sin and Miſery, and extream neceſſity of Chriſt and Salvation: Their Eyes were never open to ſee themſelves as they are, nor their Hearts ſoundly humbled in the ſenſe of their Condition: If this were done, they would ſoon be brought to value a Saviour. A truly broken Heart can no more make light of Chriſt and Salvation, than a hungry Man of his Food, or a ſick Man of the means that

that would give him ease. Till then, our Words cannot have access to their *Hearts*: While Sin and Misery is made light of, Christ and *Salvation* will be made light of, but when these are perceived an intolerable burthen, then nothing will serve the Turn but Christ. Till Men be truly humbled, they can venture Christ and Salvation for a lust, for a little worldly gain, even for less than nothing. But when God hath illuminated them, and broken their Hearts, then they would give a World for Christ; then they must have Christ, or else they dy. *All things then are Dross and Dung in Comparison of the excellent knowledge of Christ* Phil. iii. When once they are awakned by God's Judgments, as the Poor Jayler, *Acts* xvi. 29. *Then they cry out, what shall we do to be saved?* This is the Reason why God will bring Men so low by Humiliation, to bring them to Salvation. Humble thy self under the mighty *Hand* of God, and he will exalt thee in his due Time.

4. Christ and Salvation are made light of, upon presumption that he is *theirs* already, and that God is so Merciful, and Christ that suffered so much for them is surely resolved to save them; or else it may be obtained at any Time, if it be not yet so. It is true, Grace is free, and the offer universal, according to the extent of the preaching of the Gospel; but he that hath promised thee Christ, if thou be willing on his Terms, hath not promised to make thee willing; if thou art not willing now, how doest thou think to be willing hereafter; If thou canst make thine *Heart* willing, why is it not done now? Can you do it better when Sin hath more hardned it, and God may have given thee over to thy self; if it be so easie a Matter indeed as you imagine for a Sinner to Believe and Repent at any Time, how comes it to pass that it is done by so few? But most of the World doth perish in their impenitency, when they have all the *Help* and Means that we can afford them,

them: It is the easiest Thing, and sweetest Life in the Word, to a gracious Soul to live in the Love of God, and the delightful thoughts of the Life to come, where all their *Hope* and happiness lyeth: But to the worldly Carnal *Heart*, it is as easie to remove a *Mountain* as to bring them to this; however these Men are their own Condemners, for if they think it so easie a Matter to repent and believe, and so to have Christ and right to Salvation, then have they no excuse for neglecting this that they thought so easie.

O Wretched and impenitent *Souls*, what mean you to say, when God shall ask you, why you did not repent and believe, and love your Redeemer above the World, when you thought it so easie that you could do it at any Time?

We shall now come to the Application. *Use the first*, Hence we may be informed of the blindness and folly of all carnal Men; how contemptible are their Judgments that think Christ and Salvation of little worth? What Reason is there that any should be discouraged by them, or their Scorns, or Contradictions? It is one of the Wonders of the World, *That when God hath so loved the World as to send his Son*, and Christ hath made a sure satisfaction by his Death, sufficient for them all, and offered the Benefits of it so freely to them, even without Money or Price, that yet the most of the World should Perish, yea, the most of these that are thus called by his Word: Why, here is the Reason, when Christ hath done all this, Men make light of it; God hath shewen them that he is not unwilling, and Christ hath shewen that he is not unwilling that Men should be restored to God's Favour and be saved; but Men are actually unwilling themselves. *God taketh no pleasure in the Death of Sinners, but rather that they turn and live*, *Ezek.* xxxiii. 11. But Men take such a pleasure in *Sin*, that they will dy before they will return. It is a most lamentable Thing to see how most

Men

Men do spend their Care and Time, and their Pains for known Vanities while God and Glory are laid aside. That is he that is all, should seem to them as nothing, and that which is nothing, should seem to them as good as all, that God should set Mankind in such a Race, when *Heaven* or *Hell* is their certain End; and that they should sit down and loyter, and run after the Childish Toyes of the World, and so much forget the Prize that they should run for. Oh poor distracted World, what is it you run after and neglect? *If* God had never told what you were sent into the World to do? Or whether you were going? Or what was before you in another World? Then you had been excuseable, but he hath told you till you are aweary of hearing it, and yet you make light of it.

Again, that which we most highly value, we cannot buy too dear: Christ and Salvation are freely given, yet most Men go without them, because they cannot enjoy the World and them together: they are called but to part with that which would hinder them from Christ, and they will not do it; They are called to give God his own, and to resign all to his Will, and let go the profits and pleasures of this World, when they must let go either Christ or them, and they will not; They think this too dear a Bargain, they say they must look to their Estates and Credit, and Pleasures and profit whilst Christ and Salvation are neglected. Christ has told us over and over, that if we will not forsake all for him, we cannot be his Disciples, *Matth.* x. *How* will these Despisers of Christ and *Salvation* be able one Day to look him on the Face, and give account of these neglects? *How will you escape if you neglect so great a Salvation*? Thus much I have spoken by way of Conviction, do not some of your Consciences by this time smite you, and say, *I am the Man that have made light of my Salvation*; if they do not, it is because you make light of it still, for all that is said to you. I would fain have this damning Sin

cured

cured, consider I beseech you, first, You make light of him that did not make light of thee who did deserve it; as a Man, thou art but a Worm of God, as a Sinner, thou art far viler than a *Toad*; yet Christ was so far from making light of thee and thy happiness, that he came down into the Flesh, and lived a Life of Suffering, and offered himself a Sacrifice to Justice that thou hadst provoked, that thy miserable Soul might have a remedy, and yet shall we slight him for all his Love to us?

2, Consider the work of Man's Salvation by Jesus Christ, is the Master-piece of all the Works of God, wherein he would have his Love and Mercy to be magnified. How great was the Evil and Misery that he delivered us from; the good procured for us? All are wonders from his Birth to his Ascention, from our new Birth to our Glorification, all are Wonders of matchless Mercy, and yet do you make light of them? You make light of Matters of the greatest excellency and concernment in the World, you know not what it is you slight; had you well known, you would not have done it, as Christ said to the Woman of Samaria *John* iv. 1 *Cor.* ii. 8. So had you truly known what Christ hath done and suffered for you, you would not have made light of him; had you been one Day in *Heaven*, and but seen what they possess, and seen also what miserable Souls must endure that are shut out, you would never sure make so light of Christ again. Oh Sirs, it is no trifle or Jesting Matter that the Gospel speaks of. Oh Lord, that Men did but know what Everlasting Glory, and Everlasting Torments are, would they then hear as they do. I wonder that such Thoughts do not break your sleep, and that they come not in your Minds when you are about your Labour; how can you have any quietness in your Minds, or rest, can you Eat, or Drink, or Rest, till you have some Ground of Everlasting Consolation? Is this

Man or a Corpſe, that is not concerned with Matters of ſo great Moment? That can be readier to ſleep than to tremble, when he heareth how he muſt ſtand at the Bar of God.

3. Who is it that ſends this weighty *Meſſage* to you? Is it not God himſelf? Shall the God of Heaven ſpeak, and Men make light of it? you would not ſlight the Voice of an Angel or Prince. Conſider whoſe Salvation it is you make ſlight of, Is it not your own? Are you no more near or dear to your ſelves, than to make light of your own Happineſs or Miſery? Why Sirs, do you not care whether you be ſaved or damned? Is ſelf love loſt? Are you turned your own Enemies? *Prov.* i. 25. *All they that hate ME, love Death.*

4. Conſider the time is near when Chriſt and ſalvation will not be made light of, as now they are, when God hath ſhaken theſe careleſs Souls out of their Bodies, and you muſt anſwer for all your Sins in your own Name; O then, What would you give for a *Saviour*, when a thouſand Bills ſhall be brought againſt you, and none to relieve you? Then you will conſider, that Chriſt would now have ſtood between me and the wrath of God; had I not deſpiſed him he would have anſwered all. When you ſee the World hath left you, and your Companions in *Sin* have deceived themſelves and you, and all your merry Days are gone, then what would you give for that Chriſt and Salvation that now you account not worth your Labour; do you think when you ſee the Judgment ſet, and you are doomed to Everlaſting Perdition for your wickedneſs, that you ſhould make as light of Chriſt as now. Will he then be worth ten thouſand Worlds, and is he not now worth the higheſt Eſtimation and deareſt Affection? So much for the hainouſneſs of this *Sin*, of making light of Chriſt. I now come to know your Reſolution for the Time to come; do you mean to

ſet

ſet as light by Chriſt and Salvation as hitherto, and to be the ſame Men after all this? I hope not, Oh, let not your Miniſters that would fain help to ſave you, be brought in as a Witneſs againſt you! Should the Lord ask them at the Day of Judgement, did you never tell theſe Men what Chriſt did for their Souls, and what need they had of him? We muſt needs ſpeak the Truth: Yea Lord, we told them as plainly as we could but they gave us no hearing, and made light of all that we ſaid to them. Oh how ſad will it prove on your ſide, if you force them to ſuch an Anſwer as this!

Will you for the Time to come Repent and believe, and make Conſcience of Duty, and earneſtly pray to God, that you may have a Part in Chriſt and Salvation? Go not out of Doors till you have breathed out theſe Deſires to God, do not ly down to reſt, till you have breathed out theſe Deſires, ſay not, God knows my neceſſities, without your ſo often praying; for tho' he do, yet he will have you know them and feel them, and exerciſe your Deſires, and all the Graces of his Holy Spirit in theſe Duties. It is he that hath commanded us to Pray continually, though he knoweth your needs without it 1 *Theſ.* v. 17. Chriſt himſelf ſpent whole Nights in Prayer, and encourageth us to this courſe, *Luke* xviii. 1.

2*dly*, Will you for the Time to come reſolvedly caſt away your known Sins at the command of Chriſt; If you have been proud or contentious, or malicious, or revengeful, be ſo no more; if you have been Adulterers, or Swearers, or Curſers, be ſo no more, you cannot hold theſe, and yet ſet by Chriſt and Salvation: What ſay you, are you reſolved to let them go or not? If not, when you know it is the Will of Chriſt, and he hath told you, ſuch ſhall not enter into his Kingdom; do not you make light of him?

3*dly*, Will

3*dly*, Will you for the Time to come ſerve God in the deareſt, as well as the cheapeſt Part of his Service, not only with your Tongues, but with your Purſes and your Deeds? ſhall the Poor find you ſet more by Chriſt than the World; pure Religion and undefiled before God is this, *To viſit the Fatherleſs and the Widows in their Afflictions* 1 *James* i. Ch. laſt Verſe. Will you reſolve to ſtick to Chriſt, and make ſure this Work of Salvation, though it coſt you all you have in this World? if you think theſe Terms too dear, you make light of Chriſt, and will be judged accordingly.

4*thly*, Will you for the future make much of all Things that tend to your Salvation, and take every help that God offers you, and gladly make uſe of all his Ordinances, attend upon the ſtrengthening Sacraments, ſpend the Lord's Day in theſe Holy imployments, inſtruct your Children and Servants in theſe Things, *Deut.* vi. 6. 7. Get into good Company that ſet their Faces Heavenwards, and that will teach you the Way, and help you thither, and take heed of the Company of wicked Scorners, or fooliſh voluptuous fleſhly Men, or any that would hinder you in this Work. Will you do theſe Things, or will you ſhew that you are ſlighters of Chriſt by neglect of theſe? Will you take it for your higheſt Honour that you may be Chriſt's Diſciples, and may be admitted to ſerve and worſhip him, and rejoice with holy Confidence in the ſufficiency of that Sacrifice by which you may have Pardon of all your failings, and Right to the Inheritance of the Saints in light. If you do each Thing ſincerely, you will ſhew that you ſet by Chriſt and Salvation or elſe not. *Laſtly*, Sirs, I have now done the Work which I have been upon, what Effect it hath or will have upon your Hearts, *I* know not, nor is it in my Power to accompliſh that which my Soul

Soul deſireth for you; were it the Lord's Will that I might have my Wiſh herein, theſe Words which you have heard read unto you, ſhould ſo ſtrike you that the ſecured ſhould be awakened by them, and that none might Periſh by the ſlighting of their Salvation. O that I could make every Mans Conſcience a Preacher to himſelf, that it might do it, which is ever with you. That the next Time thou goes Prayerleſs to Bed, or about your Buſineſs, Conſcience may cry out, doeſt thou ſet no more by Chriſt and thy Salvation? the next Time thou art ready to ruſh upon known Sins, and to pleaſe your fleſhly Deſires againſt the Command of God, Conſcience might cry out, is Chriſt and Salvation of no more worth than to caſt them away, or venture them for thy Luſts? That when you are next ſpending the Lord's Day in Idleneſs or vain Sports, Conſcience might tell you what you are doing. In a Word, that in all your Neglects of Duty, your ſticking at the ſuppoſed Labour or Coſt of holy Life, yea in all your cold and lazy Prayers and Performances, Conſcience might tell you how unſuteable ſuch Endeavours are to the Reward; and that Chriſt and Salvation ſhould not be ſo ſlighted. It is a thouſand pitties that when God hath provided a Saviour for the World, and when Chriſt hath ſuffered ſo much for their Sins, and made ſo full a Satisfaction to Divine Juſtice, and purchaſed ſo glorious a Kingdom for his Saints, and all this is offered ſo freely to Sinners, to loſt and unworthy Sinners, even for nothing, that yet ſo many Millions ſhould everlaſtingly periſh, becauſe they make light of their Saviour and Salvation, and prefer the vain World and their Luſts before them. Thus I have delivered my Meſſage, the Lord open your Hearts to receive it. I have perſwaded you with the Words of Truth and Soberneſs; the Lord perſwade

ſwade you more effectually, or elſe all is loſt. Let us hear the Concluſion of the whole Matter, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man.*

FINIS.

5 AP 58